OUR SHORT STORY PAGE

SAPPHIRA

BY GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

MR. HEMINGWAY had transacted a great deal of business with Miss Tennant's father; otherwise he must have shunned the proposition upon which she came to him. Indeed, wrinkling his bushy brows, he as much as told her that he was a banker and not a pawnbroker.

"I'm not asking the bank to do this for me," she said, and she looked extra lovely (one purpose of course). "I'm asking you——"

Mr. Hemingway poked the cluster of jewels very gingerly with his forefinger as if they were a lizard.

"And, of course," she said, "they are worth twice the money; maybe three or four times."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Hemingway, "you will take offense if I suggest that your father——"

"Of course," she said, "papa would do it; but he would insist on reasons. My reasons involve another, Mr. Hemingway, and so it would not be honorable for me to give them."

"And yet," said the banker, twinkling, "your reasons would tempt me to accommodate you with the loan you ask for far more than your collateral."

"Oh," she said, "you are a business man. I could give you reasons, and be sure they would go no further—even if you thought them funny. But if papa heard them, and thought them funny, as he would, he would play the sieve. I don't want this money for myself, Mr. Hemingway."

"They never do," said he.

She laughed.

"I wish to lend it in turn," she said, "to a person who has been reckless, and who is in trouble, but in whom I believe. . . . But perhaps," she went on, "the person, who is very proud, will take offense at my offer of help. . . . In which case, Mr. Hemingway, I should return you the money to-morrow."

"This person——" he began, twinkling.

"Oh," she said, "I couldn't bear to be teased. The person is a young gentleman. Any interest that I take in him is a business interest pure and simple. I believe that, tried over his present difficulties, he will steady down and become a credit to his sex. Can I say more than that?" She smiled drolly.

"And you wish to lend him five thousand dollars, and your interest in him is platonic?"

"Nothing so ardent," said she demurely. "I wish him to pay his debts, to give me his word that he will neither drink nor gamble until he has paid back his debt to me, and I will suggest that he go out to one of those big Western states and become a man."

Mr. Hemingway swept the jewels together and wrapped them in the tissue paper in which she had brought them.

"And by the way," she said, when the details of the loan had been arranged, and she had stuffed the five thousand dollars into the palm of a wash glove, "nobody must know about this, because I shall have to say that—my gewgaws have been stolen. Papa will ask point blank why I never wear the pearls he gave me, and I shall have to anticipate."

"How?" he asked.

"Oh," she said demurely, "to-night or to-morrow night I shall rouse the household with screams, and claim that I woke and saw a man bending over my dressing table."

She rose, still demure and cool, but with a strong sparkling in her eyes as from a difficult matter successfully adjusted, left the office.

In the fall from grace of David Larkin there was involved no great show of natural depravity. Larkin's was the case of a young man who tried to do what he was not old enough, strong enough, or wise enough to "get away with," as the saying is. Aiken did not corrupt him; he was corrupt when he came, with a bank account of thirty-five hundred dollars snatched from the lap of Dame Fortune, at a moment when she was minding some other small boy. Horses running up to their form, spectacular bridge hands (not well played), and bets upon every subject that can be thought of had all contributed. Then Larkin caught a cold in his nose, so that it ran all day and all night, and because the Browns had invited him to Aiken for a fortnight whenever he cared to come, he seized upon the excuse of his cold and boarded the first train. He was no sooner in Aiken than Dame Fortune ceased minding the other small boy, and turned her petulant eyes upon Larkin. Forthwith he began to lose.

Bad luck is not a good excuse for a failure in character; but God knows how wickedly provocative thereof it can be. The elders of the Aiken club did not notice that Larkin was slipping from grace, because his slipping was gradual; but they noticed all of a sudden, with pity, chagrin (for they liked him), and kindly contempt, that he had fallen. Forthwith a wave of reform swept over the Aiken club, or it amounted to that.

But one night, being sure they could not be construed into an appeal for help, or anything but a sympathetic scolding, he made his sorry confessions into the lovely pink hollow of Miss Tennant's ear.

Instead of a scolding, he received sympathy and understanding; and he misconstrued the fact that she caught his hand in hers and squeezed it very hard; and did not know that he had misconstrued that fact until he found that it was her cheek that he had kissed instead of her hastily averted lips.

This rebuff did not prevent him from crowning the story of his young life with further confessions. And it is on record that when Larkin came into the brightly lighted club there was dust upon the knees of his trousers.

"I am fond of you, David," she had said, "and in spite of all the mess you have made of things, I believe in you; but even if I were fonder than fondest of you, I should despise myself if I listened to you—now."

But she did not sleep all night for thinking how she could be of real, material help to the young man and cause him to turn into the straight, narrow path that always leads to success, and sometimes to achievement.

Every spring the Mannings, who have nothing against them except that they live on the wrong side of town, give a wistaria party. The Mannings live for the blossoming of the wistaria which covers their charming porticoed house from top to toe, and fills their grounds.

Even Larkin when he paused under the towering entrance vines, a mauve and a white, forgot his troubles. And coming upon tea tables standing in the open and covered with good things, and finding, among the white flannel and muslin guests, Miss Tennant, very obviously on the lookout for him, his cup was full. When they had drunk very deep of orangeade, and eaten jam sandwiches followed by chicken sandwiches and walnut cake, they went strolling (Miss Tennant still looking completely ethereal—a creature that lived on the odor of flowers and kind thoughts rather than the more material edibles mentioned above), and then Larkin felt that his cup was overflowing.

Larkin once more filled his lungs with the breath of wistaria and was for letting it out in further confessions of what he felt to be his heart's ultimate depths. But Miss Tennant was too quick for him. She drew five one thousand dollar bills from the palm of her glove and put them in his hand.

"There," she said.

"What is this for?" he said.

"This is a loan," said she, "from me to you; to be a tiding over of present difficulties, a reminder of much that has been pleasant in the past, and an earnest of future well-doing. Good luck to you, David."

"I wish I could take it," said the young man, with a swift, slanting smile. . . . God bless you!" And he returned the bills to her.

She smiled cheerfully, but a little disdainfully.

"Very well, then," said she. "I tear them up."

"Oh!" cried Larkin. "Don't make a mess of a beautiful incident."

"Then take them."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Oh, you know as well as I do that a man can't borrow from a girl."

"A man," she said; "what is a man? I can answer better by telling you what a man is not. A man is not a creature who loafs when he ought to be at work, who loses money that he hasn't got, who drinks liquor that he cannot carry, and who upon such a noble groundwork feels justified in making love to a decent, self-respecting girl. That is not a man, David. A man would have not need of any help from me. . . . But you—you are a child that has escaped from its nurse, a bird that has fallen out of its nest before it has learned to fly, and you have done nothing but foolish things. . . . But somehow I have learned to suspect you of a better self, where, half strangled with foolishnesses and extravagance, there lurks a certain contrition and a certain sweetness. . . . God knows I should like to see you a man. . . ."

Larkin jumped to his feet, and all of him that showed was crimson, and he could have cried. But he felt no anger, and he kept his eyes upon hers.

"Thank you," he said; "may I have them?"

He stuffed the bills into his pocket.

"I have no security," he said. "But I will give you my word of honor neither to drink, neither to gamble, neither to loaf, nor to make love until I have paid you back interest and principle."

"Where will you go? What will you do, David?"

"West—God knows. I will do something. . . . You see that I can't say any thanks, don't you? That I am almost choking, and that at any moment I might burst into sobs?"

They were silent, and she looked into his face unconsciously while he mastered his agitation. He sat down beside her presently, his elbows on his knees, his chin deep in his hands.

"Is God blessing you by any chance?" he said. "Do you feel anything of the kind? Because I am asking Him to—so very hard. I shall ask Him to a million times every day until I die. . . . Would it be possible for one who has deserved nothing, but who would like it for the strengthingest, beautifulest memory. . . ."

"Quick, then," said she, "some one's coming."

That very night screams pierced to every corner of the Tennants' great house on the Whiskey Road. Those whom screams affect in one way sprang from bed; those whom they affect in another hid under the bedclothes.

Miss Tennant stood in the doorway of her room. She was pale and greatly agitated, but her eyes shone with courage and resolve. In one hand she had a golf club—a niblick.

"Oh!" she cried, when her father was sufficiently recovered from overturning the cabinet to listen, "there was a man in my room."

Her father and brother dashed downstairs and out into the grounds. The butler hurried to the telephone (still carrying his bucket of water) and rang Central and asked for the Chief of Police. Central answered, after a long interval, that the Chief of Police was out of order, and rang off.

The next day Miss Tennant dispatched the following note to Hemingway:

Dear, kind Mr. Hemingway:

You have heard of the great robbery, and of my dreadful fright. But there is no use crying about it. It is one of those dreadful things, I suppose, that simply have to happen. Papa is going to offer five thousand dollars reward for the return of my jewels, and no questions asked. Do you know, I have a feeling that you are going to be instrumental in finding the stolen goods. I have a feeling that the thief (if he has any sense at all) will negotiate through you for their return. And I am sure the thief would never have taken them if he had known how badly it would make me feel, and what a blow he was striking at the good name of Aiken.

I am, dear Mr. Hemingway, contritely and sincerely yours,

SAPPHIRA TENNANT
(formerly Dolly Tennant).

But Mr. Hemingway refused to touch the reward, and Miss Tennant remained in his debt for the full amount of her loan. She began at once to save what she could from her allowance. And she called this fund her "conscience money."

Aiken felt that it had misjudged Larkin, and he departed in high favor. He had paid what he owed, so Aiken confessed to having misjudged his resources. He had suddenly stopped short in all evil ways, so Aiken confessed to having misjudged his strength of character. He had announced that he was going out West to seek the bubble wealth in the mouth of an Idaho apple valley, so Aiken cheered him on and wished him well. And when Aiken beheld the calmness of his farewells to Miss Tennant, Aiken said: "And he seems to have gotten over that."

In the smoker bound West there was a fine old gentleman in a blue serge suit and white spats who took a fancy to David; just when David had about come to the conclusion that nothing in the world looked friendly except suicide.

If David had earned nothing else from Miss Tennant, he had learned to speak the truth. "Any employer that I am ever to have," he resolved, "shall know all that there is to be known about me." And so, when the preliminaries of smoking-room acquaintance had been made—the cigar offered and refused, and one's reasons for or against smoking plainly stated—David was offered (and accepted) the opportunity to tell the story of his life.

David shook his head at a brilliantly labeled cigar eight inches long.

"I love to smoke," he said, "but I've promised not to."

"Better habit than liquor," suggested the old gentleman in the white spats."

"I've promised not to drink."

"Men who don't smoke and who don't drink," said the old gentleman, "usually spend their time running after the girls. My name is Uriah Grey."

"Mine is David Larkin," said David, and he smiled cheerfully, "and I've promised not to make love."

"What—never?" exclaimed Mr. Grey.

"Not until I have a right to," said David.

Mr. Grey drew three brightly bound volumes from between his leg and the arm of his chair, and intimated that he was about to make them a subject of remark.

"I love stories," he said, "and in the hope of a story I paid a dollar and a half for each of three novels. This one tells you how to prepare rotten meat for the market. This one tells you when and where to find your neighbor's wife without being caught. And in this one a noble young Chicagoan describes the life of society persons in the effete East."

"Oh," said David, "if it's my story you want, I don't mind a bit. It will chasten me to tell it, and you can stop me the minute you are bored."

And then, slip by slip, and bet by bet, he told his story, withholding only the sex of that dear friend who had loaned him the five thousand dollars, and to whom he had bound himself by promises.

"Well," said Mr. Grey, when David had finished, "I don't know your holding-out powers, Larkin, but you do certainly speak the truth without mincing."

"That," said David, "is a promise I have made to myself in admiration of and emulation of my friend. But I have had my little lesson, and I shall keep the other promises until I have made good."

"And then?" Mr. Grey beamed.

"Then," said David, "I shall smoke, and I shall make love."

"But no liquor."

David laughed.

"I have a secret clause in my pledge," said he; "it is not to touch liquor except on the personal invitation of my future father-in-law, whoever he may be." But he had Dolly Tennant's father in his mind, and the joke seemed good to him.

"Well," said Mr. Grey, "I don't know as I'd go into apple growing. You haven't got enough capital."

"But," said David, "I intend to begin at the bottom and work up."

"When I was a youngster," said Mr. Grey, "I began at the bottom of an apple tree and worked my way to the top. There I found a wasp's nest. Then I fell and broke both arms. That was a lesson to me. Don't go up for your pile, my boy. Go down. Go down into the beautiful earth, and take out the precious metals."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed David; "you're the Mr. Grey of Denver."

"I have a car hitched on to this train," said the magnate; "I'd be very glad of your company at dinner—seven-thirty. It's not every young man that I'd invite. But seeing that you're under bond not to make love until you've made good, I can see no objection to introducing you to my grand-daughter."

"Grandpa," said Miss Violet Grey," who was sixteen, spoiled, and exquisite, "make that poor boy stop off at Denver, and do something for him."

"Since when," said her grandfather, "have you been so down on apples, miss?"

"Oh," said she with an approving shudder, "all good women fear them—like so much poison."

"But," said Mr. Grey (Mr. "Iron Grey," some called him), "if I take this young fellow up, it won't be to put him down in a drawing-room, but in a hole a thousand feet deep, or thereabouts."

"And when he comes out," said she, "I shall have returned from being finished in Europe."

"Don't know what there is so attractive about these young Eastern ne'er-do-weels," said the old gentleman, "but this one has got a certain something. . . ."

"It's his inimitable truthfulness," said she.

"Not to me," said her grandfather, "so much as the way he says 'w' instead of 'r' and at the same time gives the impression of having the makings of a man in him. . . ."

"Oh," she said, "make him, grandpa, do!"

"And if I make him?" The old gentleman smiled provokingly.

"Why," said she, "then I'll break him."

"Or," said her grandfather, who was used to her sudden fancies and subsequent disenchantments, "or else you'll shake him."

Then he pulled her ears for her, and sent her to bed.

In one matter David was, from the beginning of his new career, firmly resolved. He would in no case write Miss Tennant of his hopes and fears. If he was to be promoted she was not to hear of it until after the fact; and she should not be troubled with the sordid details of his savings-bank account. As to fears, very great at first, these dwindled, became atrophied, and were consumed in the fire of work from the moment when that work changed from a daily nuisance to a daily miracle, at once the exercise and the reward of intelligence.

I should like to say that David's swift upward career owed thanks entirely to his own good habits, newly discovered gifts for mining engineering, and industry; but a strict regard for the truth prevents. Upon his own resources and talenth he must have succeeded in the end; but his success was the swifter for the interest, and presently affection, that Uriah Grey himself contributed toward it. In short, David's chances came to him as soon as he was strong enough to handle them; and were even created on purpose for him; whereas if he had had no one behind him, he must have had to wait interminably for them.

His field work ended about the time that Miss Violet Grey returned from Europe "completely finished and done up," as she put it herself, and he became a fixture of growing importance in Mr. Grey's main offices in Denver, and a thrill in Denver society. His baby w's instead of rolling r's thrilled the ladies; his good habits coupled with his manliness and success thrilled the men.

Platonic friendships became the rage. David himself, as leader, maintained a dozen such; chiefest of which was with the newly finished Miss Grey. At first her very soul revolted against a friendship of this sort. She was lovely, and she knew it; with lovely clothes she made herself even lovelier, and she knew this, too. She was young, and she rejoiced in it. And she had always been a spoiled darling, and she wished to be made much of, to cause a dozen hearts to beat in the breast where but one beat before, to be followed, waited on, adored, bowed down to, and worshiped. She wished yellow-flowering jealousy to sprout in David's heart instead of the calm and loyal friendliness to which alone the soil seemed adapted. She knew that he often wrote letters to a Miss Tennant; and she would have liked very much to have that Miss Tennant in her power, and to have scalped here there and then.

Her grandfather, who had been reading Ibsen, remarked to himself: "It may be artistically and dramatically inexcusable for the ingénue suddenly to become the heroine—but I like it. As to the cause—" and the old gentleman rested in his deep chair till far in the night, twiddling his thumbs and thinking long thoughts. Finally, frowning and troubled, he rose and went off to his bed.

"Is it," thought he, "because he gave his word not to make love until he had made good—or is it because he really doesn't give a damn about poor little Vi? If it's the first reason, why, he's absolved from that promise, because he has made good, and every day he's making better. But if it's the second reason, why, then, this world is a wicked, dreary place. Poor little Vi—poor little Vi . . . only two things in the whole universe that she can't get—the moon, and David—the moon, and David——"

About noon the next day David requested speech with his chief.

"Well?" said Uriah. The old man looked worn and feeble. He had had a sorrowful night.

"I haven't had a vacation in a year," said David. "Will you give me three weeks, sir?"

"Want to go back East and pay off your obligations?"

David nodded.

"I have the money and interest in hand," said he.

Mr. Grey smiled.

"I suppose you'll come back smoking like a chimney, drinking like a fish, betting like a bookmaker, and keeping a whole chorus in picture hats."

"I think I'll not even smoke," said David. "About a month ago the last traces of hankering left me, and I feel like a free man at last."

"But you'll be making love right and left," said Mr. Grey cheerfully, but with a shrewd eye upon the young man's expression of face.

David looked grave and troubled. He appeared to be turning over difficult matters in his mind. Then he smiled gayly.

"At least I shall be free to make love if I want to."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Grey. "People don't make love because they want to. They do it because they have to."

"True," said he. And he walked meditatively back to his own desk, took up a pen, meditated for a long time, and then wrote:

"Best friend that any man ever had in the world! I shall be in Aiken on the twenty-fifth, bringing with me that which I owe and can pay, and deeply conscious of that deeper debt that I owe, but never can hope to pay. But I will do what I can. I will not now take back the promises I gave, unless you wish. And if all the service and devotion that is in me for the rest of time seems worth having to you, they are yours. But you know that. David."

Neither the hand which Miss Tennant laid on his, nor the cigarette which she lighted for him, completely mollified Mr. Billy McAllen. He was no longer young enough to dance with pleasure to a maiden's whims. The experience of dancing from New York to Newport and back, and over the deep ocean and back, and up and down Europe and back with the late Mrs. McAllen—now Mrs. Jimmie Greenleaf—had sufficed. He would walk to the altar any day with Miss Tennant, but he would not dance.

"You have so many secrets with yourself," he complained, "and I'm so very reasonable."

"True, Billy," said Miss Tennant. "But if I put up with your secrets, you should put up with mine."

"I have none," said he, unless you are rudely referring to the fact that I gave my wife such grounds for divorce as every gentleman must be prepared to give to a lady who has tired of him. You know that."

"At least, Dolly," said he, more gently, "announce our engagement, and marry me inside of six months. I've been patient for eighteen. It would have been easy if you had given a good reason. . . ."

"My reason," said she, "will be in Aiken to-morrow."

"You speak with such assurance," said he, smiling, "that I feel sure your reason is not traveling by the Southern. And you'll tell me the reason to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow, Billy—now."

He made no comment, fearing that she might seize upon any as a pretext for putting him off. But he slipped an arm around her waist.

"My reason, Billy, is a young man. Don't let your arm slacken that way. There is nothing in the expression 'a young man' to turn you suddenly cold toward me. Don't be a goose. . . . Not so tight." They laughed happily. "I will even tell you his name," she resumed—"David Larkin; and I was a little gone on him, and he was over ears with me. You weren't in Aiken the year he was. Well, he misbehaved something dreadfully, Billy; betted himself into a deep, deep hole, and tried to float himself out. I took him in hand, loaned him money, and took his solemn word that he would not even make love until he had paid me back. There was no real understanding between us, only——"

"Only?" McAllen was troubled.

"Only I think he couldn't have changed suddenly from a little fool into a man if he hadn't felt that there was an understanding. And his letters, one every week, confirm that; though he's very careful, because of his promise, not to make love in them. . . . You see he's been working his head off—there's no way out of it, Billy—for me. . . . If you hadn't crossed my humble path I think I should have possessed enough sentiment for David to have been—the reward."

"But there was no understanding."

"No. Not in so many words. But at the last talk we had together he was humble and pathetic and rather manly, and I did a very foolish thing."

"What?"

"Oh," she said with a blush, "I sat still."

"Let me blot it out," said McAllen, drawing her very close.

"But I can only remember up to seven," said she, "and I am afraid that nothing can blot them out as far as David is concerned. He will come to-morrow as sure that I have been faithful to him as that he has been faithful to me. . . . It's all very dreadful. . . . He will pay me back the money, and the interest; and then I shall give him back the promises that he gave me, and then he will make love to me. . . ."

"But why," said he, "when you got to care for me didn't you let this young man learn gradually in your letters to him that—that it was all off?"

"I was afraid, don't you see," said she, "that if the incentive was suddenly taken away from him—he might go to pieces. And I was fond of him, and I am proud to think that he has made good for my sake, and the letters. . . . Oh, Billy, it's a dreadful mess. My letters to him have been rather warm, I am afraid."

"If he would have gone to pieces before this," said McAllen, "why not now?—after you tell him, I mean."

"Why not," said she dismally. "But if he does, Billy, I can only be dreadfully sorry. I'm certainly not going to wreck our happiness, just to keep him on the war path."

"He'll be very sad and miserable—you won't be carried away? You won't, upon the impulse of the moment, feel that it is your duty to go on saving him? . . . If that should happen, Dolly, I should go to pieces."

David may have thought it pure chance that he should find Dolly Tennant alone.

"David!" she exclaimed. Her tone at once expressed delight at seeing him, and was an apology for remaining languidly seated. And she looked him over in a critical, maternal way.

"If you hadn't sent in your name," she said, "I should never have known you. You stand taller and broader, David. You filled the doorway. But you're not really much bigger, now that I look at you. It's your character that has grown. . . . I'm so proud of you."

"And now," she said, "you must tell me all that you haven't written."

"Not quite yet," said David. "There is first a little matter of business. . . ."

"Oh—" she protested.

But David counted out his debt to her methodically, with the accrued interest.

"But I," she said, "I too, have things of yours to return."

"Of mine?" He lifted his eyebrows expectantly.

She waved her hand, white and clean as a cherry blossom, toward a claw-footed table on which stood decanters, ice, soda, cigarettes, cigars and matches.

"Your collateral," she said.

He stepped to the table, smiling charmingly, and poured from the nearest decanter into a glass, added ice and soda, and lifting the mixture touched it to his lips, and murmured, "To you."

Then he put a cigarette in his mouth, and after drawing the one breath that served to light it flicked it, with perfect accuracy, half across the room and into the fireplace.

"Betcher two cents it snows to-morrow," said he.

"Done with you, David," she took him up merrily.

"I gave you one more promise," he said. "Is that too, returned?"

"Of course," she said, "all the promises you gave are herewith returned."

"Then I may make love?" he asked, very gently.

"Yes, David," she said slowly, "you may—as a matter of form."

"Only in that way?"

"In that way only, David—to me."

"I thought—I thought," said the young man in confusion.

"I made you think so," she said generously. "Let all of the punishment that can be heaped on me . . . David . . ." There was a deep appeal in her voice as for mercy and forgiveness.

"Then," said he, "you never did care—at all."

"Never, David—never at all—at least not in that way," she said. "If I let you think so it was because I thought it would help you to be strong and to succeed. . . . God knows I think I was wrong to let you think so. . . ."

She had the tenderest heart; and in a moment the truth blossomed therein—a truth that brought her pleasure, bewilderment, and was not unmixed with mortification.

"The man," she said gently, "has found him another girl!"

The man bowed his head and blushed.

"But I have kept my promise, Dolly."

"Of course you have, you poor, dear, long-suffering soul. Oh, David, when I think what I have been taking for granted I am humiliated, and ashamed—but I am glad, too. I cannot tell you how glad."

A pair of white gloves, still showing the shape of her hands, lay in the chair where Miss Tennant had tossed them. David brought her one of these gloves.

"Put it on," he said.

When she had done so, he took her gloved hand in his and kissed it.

"As a matter of form," he said.

She laughed easily, though the blush of humiliation had not yet left her cheeks.

"Tell me," she said, "what you would have done, David, if—if I did care."

"God punish me," he said gravely, "oh, best friend that ever a man had in the world, if I should not then have made you a good husband."

Not long after McAllen was with her.

"Well?" he said.

"Well," said she, "there was a train that he could catch. And I suppose he caught it."

"Is he hard hit?"

"I think," she said, "that you may say that he is hard hit—very hard hit."

"Poor soul," said Billy tenderly.

"Oh, Billy!" she exclaimed, "I feel so false and so old."

"Whose girl are you?"

"I'm Billy McAllen's girl." The tears ceased.

"All of you?"

"All of me. . . . Oh, Billy—love me always—only love me. . . ."

"You are two days ahead of schedule, David. I'm glad to see you."

The old man endeavored to read in the young man's face the answers to those questions which so greatly concerned him. Uriah Grey's eyesight was famous for two things: for its miraculous, almost chemical ability to detect the metals in one, and the gold in men. He sighed; but not so that David could hear. The magnate detected happiness where less than two weeks before he had read doubt, hesitation, and a kind of dumb misery.

"Well, sir, I paid my debts, and got back my collateral."

"Well, sir?"

"I tasted whisky," said David. "I lighted a cigarette, I registered a bet of two cents upon the weather, and I made love."

Uriah Grey with difficulty suppressed a moan.

"Did you!" he said dully.

"Yes," said David. "I kissed the glove upon a lady's hand." He laughed. "It smelled of gasoline," he said.

Mr. Grey grunted.

"And what are your plans?"

"What!" cried David offendedly. "Are you through with me?"

"No, my boy—no."

David hesitated.

"Mr. Grey," he began, and paused.

"Well, sir?"

"It is now lawful for me to make love," said David; "but I should do so with a better grace if I had your permission and approval."

Mr. Grey was puzzled.

"What have I to do with it?"

"You have a granddaughter . . ."

"What!" thundered the old man. "You want to make love to my granddaughter!"

"Yes," said David boldly, "and I wonder what you are going to say."

"I have only one word to say—Hurry!"

Presently David was looking into the lovely face that he held between his hands. He had by this time squeezed her shoulders, patted her back, kissed her feet, her dress, her hands, her eyes, and pawed her hair. They were both very short of breath.

"Whose girl are you?"

"I'm David Larkin's girl."

"All of you?"

"All—all—all——"

"Oh!" she cried. "There was a man in my ROOM."